

Planting seeds of

Island Creek Oysters Foundation expanding its outreach with new collaboration, new partners

By Kathryn Koch
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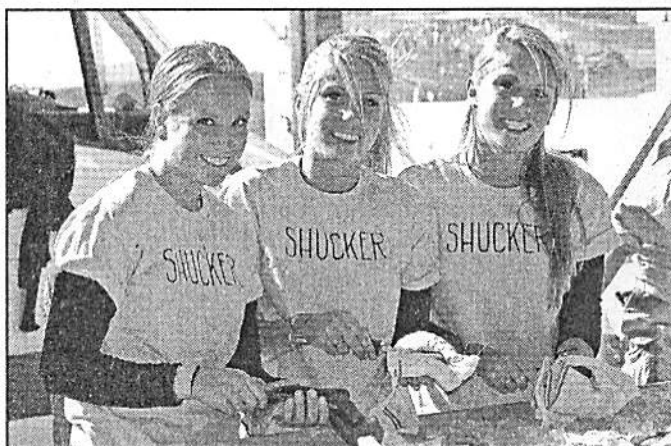
While walking the streets of Haiti and speaking to its people, it became clear to Shore Gregory that he and Island Creek Oysters founder Skip Bennett were among people who needed their help.

"Skip and I felt really compelled to get involved," Gregory, Island Creek's executive vice president, said. "It was an unbelievably moving trip because it was so eye-opening."

When The Island Creek Oysters Foundation was established in 2008, Island Creek Oysters was already funding scholarships for Duxbury students and doing other charitable work, but the creation of the Foundation advanced its efforts to help people in need worldwide.

"It became a part of who we are," he said.

Last year the Foundation raised \$160,000 for a total of nearly \$300,000 in three



Volunteers shuck oysters at a past Island Creek Oyster Festival. COURTESY PHOTO

years in support of global aquaculture interests to combat hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

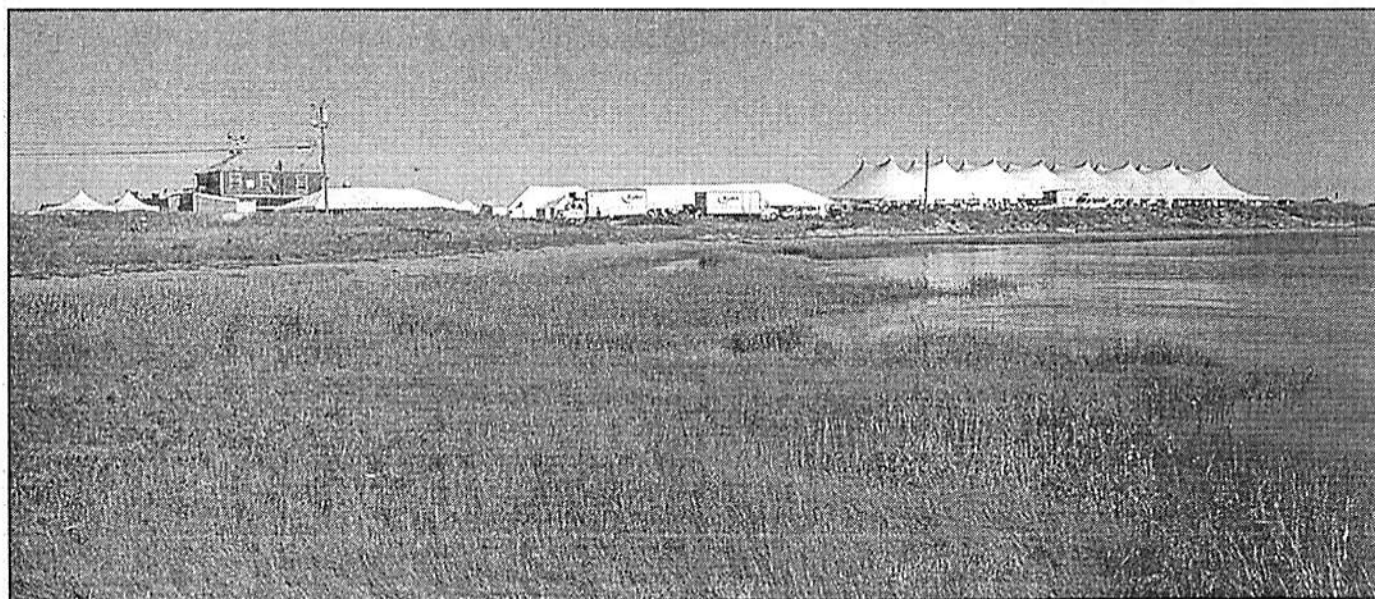
The major beneficiary of the fundraising has been the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute aquaculture project in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Island Creek's funding helps support a shellfish hatchery where oyster seeds are planted. Proceeds from Island Creek's annual Oyster Festival, now in its sixth year, will again fund this collaboration.

While proceeds from Oyster

Festival Saturday, Sept. 10, on Duxbury Beach will continue to fund obligations in Tanzania for the coming year, money raised during a special "Friends for Haiti" party Friday, Sept. 9, will benefit the people of Haiti through Caribbean Harvest, a charitable foundation using modern aquaculture technology to create a domestic fish farming industry for Haiti.

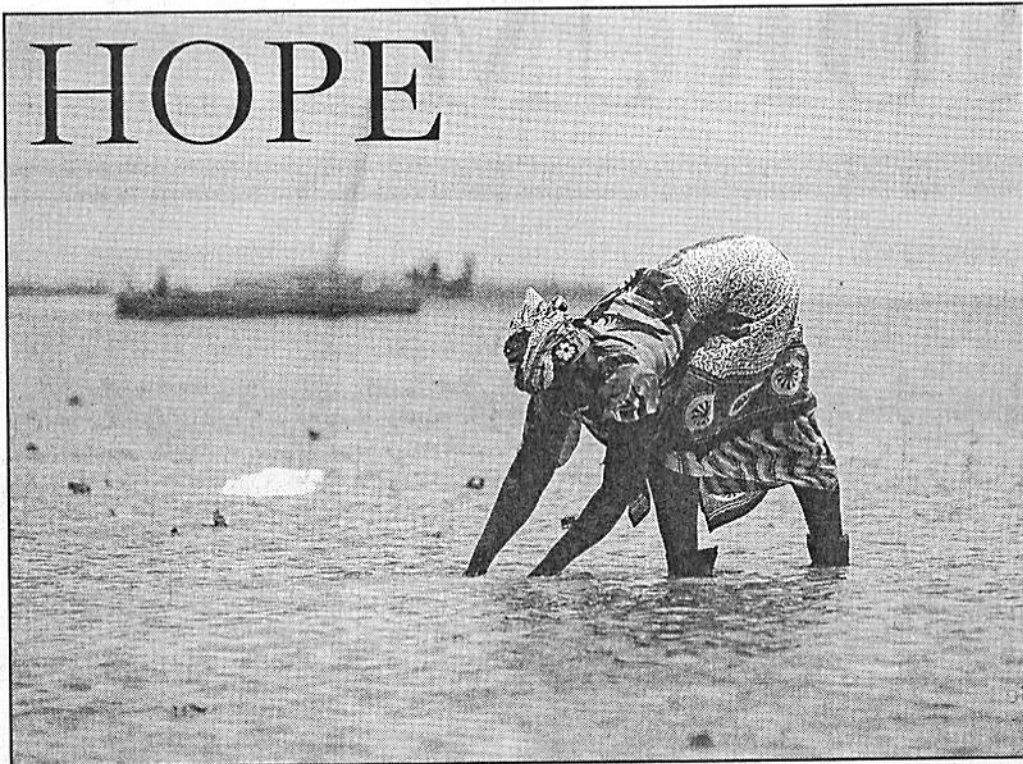
"We're really excited to help bring greater awareness to that project," Gregory said.

Haiti has repeatedly been



Island Creek Oysters' sixth annual Oyster Festival will return Saturday, Sept. 10. COURTESY PHOTO

HOPE



The Island Creek Oysters Foundation supports oyster farming in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

COURTESY PHOTO/DAVID GROSSMAN

battered by major storms and a devastating earthquake in recent years. Most recently, it felt the impact of Hurricane Irene's raging waters caused by heavy rain connected with the hurricane.

During the five days Gregory and Bennett spent in impoverished Haiti in March, they met with Dr. Valentin Abe, who started Caribbean Harvest in 2005. Abe will be welcomed to Duxbury to speak to partygoers Friday night and during the festival Saturday.

Island Creek Oysters connected with Abe through Paul Farmer, founder of the disaster relief organization Partners in Health. Island Creek Oysters and Caribbean Harvest are working in partnership with the William J. Clinton Foundation established by former President Bill Clinton.

Their focus, Gregory said, is making the most effective use of the Foundation's nonprofit dollars. To that end, they do their due diligence before deciding to support a project. The Foundation has added an executive director to grow the organization year-round.

Giving back has been at the core of Island Creek Oys-

ters since Bennett started the company in 1997, Gregory said. As the Oyster Festival has grown in size and popularity, the greater the impact the Foundation has had on the world.

Gregory said it's hard to describe what it was like in Haiti, a country that lacks all levels of infrastructure, but he'll never forget the humbling experience.

About 3,000 people are expected at the Oyster Festival, and it usually sells out. The maximum attendance at the "Friends for Haiti" party will be 500 people. More on the Foundation can be found at www.islandcreekoysters-foundation.com.